



Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council



"Reaching Out"

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council

2005 Annual Report

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*Inside photography courtesy of Vince Holmes,
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.*

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Reaching Out

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC) is charged with a specific list of responsibilities, such as monitoring the waiting list (Order of Selection), reviewing policy changes, and working with the state agency on the state plan. We also have responsibilities that allow us the flexibility to set priorities. Under the mandate to monitor the performance of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Council focuses on underserved groups and groups with less-successful outcomes. We use various methods to research the issue and seek feedback from the individuals who receive DVR services, as well as those who provide them. In this year's report, you will see that some of the issues are resolved and others are improving.

In July 2004, Council members set priorities – our target issues. We recognized that change does not adhere to a 12- month calendar, so we committed to target these issues until the Council was satisfied with the progress. Our target issues have been:

1. Ending the government disincentives to employment.
2. Ending the use of vocational rehabilitation (VR) funds to cover accommodation costs for college students.
3. Improving training for DVR Counselors.
4. Improving access to Job Centers.
5. Improving services for TANF Recipients (W-2) with disabilities.
6. Monitoring service outcomes for specific groups.

■ Message From the Chair

7. Improving services and outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities (supported employment, transition, sub-minimum wage earners).
8. Improving DVR communication with vendors and other community partners.

In 2006, we will continue to look for any measures that can reduce the waiting time for the thousands of people on the DVR waiting list. It is the most difficult challenge for our Council members. We will not lower our expectations for services for individuals with active plans for employment. Those who are waiting deserve to have a program of services worth waiting for.

*Linda Vegoe, Chair
Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council*



WRC Chairperson Linda Vegoe

"I was in a depressed state when I first came to the DVR – and then part-time jobs gave me some independence and self worth."

DVR Consumer

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires the creation, by each state, of a Rehabilitation Council. The WRC (*formally the State Rehabilitation Planning and Advisory Council*) was created by Executive Order #196 in 1992.

Duties of the Council (*as Outlined in the Rehabilitation Act*)

- Review, analyze, and advise DVR regarding the performance of its responsibilities (*particularly regarding eligibility*), the extent and effectiveness of services, and the functions of the state agency that affect individuals with disabilities and their rehabilitation goals.
- Advise and assist DVR in the preparation of the state plan and its amendments, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.
- Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of VR and consumer satisfaction.
- Coordinate the work of the Council with the activities of other disability-related councils.
- Establish a working relationship between DVR and the State Independent Living Council and the centers for independent living in the state.

A Statement of Mission

The WRC, working on behalf of Wisconsin residents with disabilities, will review, analyze, and advise DVR regarding the performance of its responsibilities in providing quality services to persons with disabilities.

■ Overview

Vision Statement

The WRC will be a catalyst for the emergence of DVR as a leader in the development and implementation of effective service programs and advocacy for persons with disabilities throughout our state. It is our vision that persons with disabilities will enjoy full equality of opportunity, complete integration in the life of our communities, and appropriate employment which fulfills each individual's needs and aspirations.

Values and Guiding Principles

The WRC will endeavor to:

- Build partnerships among persons with disabilities, providers of service, advocacy organizations, and those other groups that can and should participate in the accomplishment of the mission and vision of the organization.
- Forge a spirit of trust and cooperation with the administration and staff of DVR and advocacy organizations for persons with disabilities so that the use of scarce resources for accomplishing the mission and vision are optimized and conditions are created for acquiring additional resources.
- Reach out to persons with disabilities throughout the state so as to create a true spirit of inclusion for every citizen, including an opportunity to contribute to the work of the WRC.
- Hear and respond to the concerns and issues raised by persons with disabilities, their advocates, and other concerned individuals so that the work of the WRC is as effective as possible, and we are able to truly be a catalyst for positive change.

Ending Government Disincentives

The federal government offers grants to states and to private agencies to encourage employers to hire individuals with disabilities. Job Centers offer training for employers on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and job site accommodations. Public and private agencies offer workshops for employers to address the myths and stereotypes about disability. The Harris Poll reports on the low cost of accommodations. All this is done because of the belief that employers are afraid to incur high health care costs or ADA lawsuits. Despite these efforts, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities remains unacceptably high.

Previous Council members urged us to look in a different direction. Government was focusing on employer attitude. They felt we should focus on government. We learned



WRC Chairperson Linda Vegoe, DVR Deputy Administrator Manuel Lugo and DVR Administrator Charlene Dwyer

that disincentives discourage individuals who require services that are not covered by employer insurance. Disincentives also discourage employers who do not understand why disabled employees choose to limit their hours.

The Wisconsin proposal, Making Work Pay, is asking for the opportunity to remove government disincentives for a group of individuals with significant disabilities and measure the outcomes and the cost-benefit.

Our Council will continue to advocate for the removal of dis-incentives so people with disabilities can maximize their employment potential.

Ending Vocational Rehabilitation Funding of College Accommodation Costs

At our Council's public hearings, we were questioned about our position on college accommodation costs. Students and college staff told us that DVR funding for accommodations were critical. We agreed that the services were critical to a student's academic success. We did not agree that DVR should take funds from the client services budget to pay for the ADA responsibilities of the colleges. We understood the growing challenges colleges face in getting adequate funding from the legislature.

As the DVR waiting list began to grow, we could not support the diversion of funds from individual services. When DVR did not have a waiting list, funding to grow quality college accommodations was a worthy use of those funds. The waiting list made it necessary for DVR to return to the "money follows the person" model.

"The help I received from DVR was remarkable. You have given me the freedom and attitude that I am capable of being independent."

DVR Consumer

*"I want to thank
you for your
constant and
persistent
encouragement.
– for not giving
up on me even
though I had.
For listening and
understanding –
you have made
a difference
in me."*

DVR Consumer

The Council made its position known in the state plan that is submitted to the federal government, recommending that DVR stop funding the ADA responsibilities of other entities. DVR and the college system agreed to a three-year plan to reduce DVR funding and then end DVR funding for accommodations. This agreement had no impact on DVR funding for individual college students. DVR and our state's college system continue to work on partnerships that improve services for students with disabilities.

Improving Training for DVR Counselors

DVR is funded by a law (Rehabilitation Act in Workforce Investment Act) that Congress reauthorizes and often changes each time it is reauthorized. As individuals with very significant limitations choose to pursue employment, counselors need to know about the disability, the accommodations, and the latest in rehabilitation technology. Congress passes other laws, such as Ticket to Work and IDEA, which include additional responsibilities for DVR.

For these reasons, our Council believes that DVR must offer competency-based, statewide training for DVR staff. DVR has offered office-by-office or small group training, but Council members have pointed out that this leads to different levels of training across the state. Our Council has shared our views with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (DVR funder) that each funding cycle should contain adequate training funds in addition to client services funds.

This target issue has not been accomplished and will continue to be a priority for the Council.

■ Year in Review

Improving Access to Job Centers

An accessibility survey of the state's Job Centers was performed several years ago. Our Council asked for the opportunity to review the results. Scheduling difficulties and delays in pulling the individual surveys into one comprehensive report have postponed our review until 2006. We have been advised that Job Centers are receiving grants to assist them in improving accessibility.

A human component of Job Center accessibility is the Navigator. The Navigator program is funded by the federal Department of Labor to assist Job Center customers with disabilities to "navigate" the programs and services of the Job Center. Our Council serves as the advisory council for the Navigator Program. Navigators give presentations at our Council meetings on areas of progress and concerns.

Wisconsin's Navigator Program has been cited as a national leader and has been funded for several unique projects that will serve as a model for other states.

Improving Services for TANF Recipients with Disabilities

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the welfare reform program that provides time-limited services for families with children facing unemployment. In Wisconsin, it is known as W-2 or Wisconsin Works.

As W-2 assisted people with child care, health care, and employment services, W-2 found that some individuals had more difficulty than others. The W-2 program identifies these

participants as “individuals with multiple barriers” to employment. A large percentage of these individuals have disabilities that limit their options for employment.

Our Council received public comment from service providers and advocates that DVR was not serving these individuals. Our Council has maintained a focus on DVR’s performance when serving individuals who are also served by other government programs. We refer to them as “shared consumers.” The data indicated low numbers given the federal estimates that 40% of the TANF participants are individuals with disabilities or families with a child with a disability.

Council members served on department W-2 workgroups, including one that focused on developing a barriers-screening tool for W-2 participants. The tool is used to identify potential accommodation needs in the beginning of the W-2 process.

As the Council studied the issue, we found the DVR waiting list to be the barrier to timely services. As Congress directed VR agencies to prioritize individuals on Social Security disability benefits, TANF time limits did not allow W-2 agencies to wait for an opening in the DVR program.

The realities of the DVR waiting list did not offer a simple solution. However, our Council has recommended changes in how the two agencies communicate, similar to the process that has been set up between high schools and DVR offices. DVR and W-2 have valuable information and expertise they can share to benefit the participants of both programs.

Monitoring Service Outcomes for Specific Groups: Students in Transition

High school students with disabilities who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) have the legal right to participate in transition planning to prepare for life after high school. VR has an important role in that planning and preparation process. High school teachers, parents, and students have voiced their frustration with DVR, its waiting list, and confusion over DVR's role in transition.

With strong participation from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Council members with expertise in transition, and DVR staff, DVR and DPI developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clarifies the roles. The DVR waiting list is a reality that will continue to disrupt a smooth transition to employment services. The MOU added unique language that attempted to address the spirit of transition.

While DVR counselors cannot purchase services for individuals on the waiting list, the MOU set up a structure that allows the DVR counselor to attend IEP meetings to offer information and expertise on assessment, accommodations, and community resources.

The initial feedback from schools and parents has been positive. Our Council will continue to monitor the implementation to insure that the spirit of the MOU becomes practice throughout Wisconsin school districts.

*"I would like
to say that with
the help of
DVR, most of
my plans and
dreams have
become reality.
The rest will
be up to me,
and I will not
stop until I
achieve them."*

DVR Consumer

Improving Services and Outcomes for Individuals with the Most-Significant (*Employment-Related*) Limitations

One of our Council's priorities is to focus on the employment outcomes for individuals with the most-significant disabilities. If a DVR agency is effective in serving individuals with multiple barriers to employment, that effectiveness will serve others as well.

Supported Employment

Supported employment is a service strategy that links DVR-funded assessment, job matching, and skill development on the job with follow-up support, such as job coaching, after the DVR services are completed. Individuals who qualify for supported employment are in Category 1 of the Order of Selection waiting list, which is the top of the list.

County human services funds have been the traditional fund-ing source for the follow-up supports, but county waiting lists and pressures to reduce county funding have reduced access to this funding source.

Our Council made a formal recommendation to DVR to arrange a summit on supported employment to look for long-term solutions by bringing together the state and county partners, advocates, service providers, and consumers who have achieved employment using the supported employment model. The summit took place in October 2005. Our Council will review the recommendations and continue to monitor the implementation in 2006.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Native Americans

The Rehabilitation Act provides grants to improve services to specific groups or disabilities when their research shows that a specific group is under-served. Section 121 in the Rehabilitation Act provides grants for American Indian Tribal Governments to operate a VR program for tribal members with disabilities living on or near reservations.

The Tribal VR programs compete for federal funding every five years. While this impacts long-range planning, the Tribal VR programs have had the benefit of a strong working relationship with Wisconsin DVR. By coordinating efforts at the local level, Tribal VR programs have been able to serve individuals who would otherwise be on the state VR waiting list.

Tom Draghi is Director of the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal VR Program and is a member of the WRC. Steven “Corky” West is Director of the Oneida Nation VR program, and Jeff Muse is the Director for the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council VR program, which serves the remaining nine Wisconsin reservations that include St. Croix, Red Cliff, Bad River, Lac Du Flambeau, Mole Lake, Stockbridge-Munsee, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, and Forest County Potawatomi.

“I just wanted to thank you for all your help and assistance these past few years. I would not have been able to do it without you.”

DVR Consumer

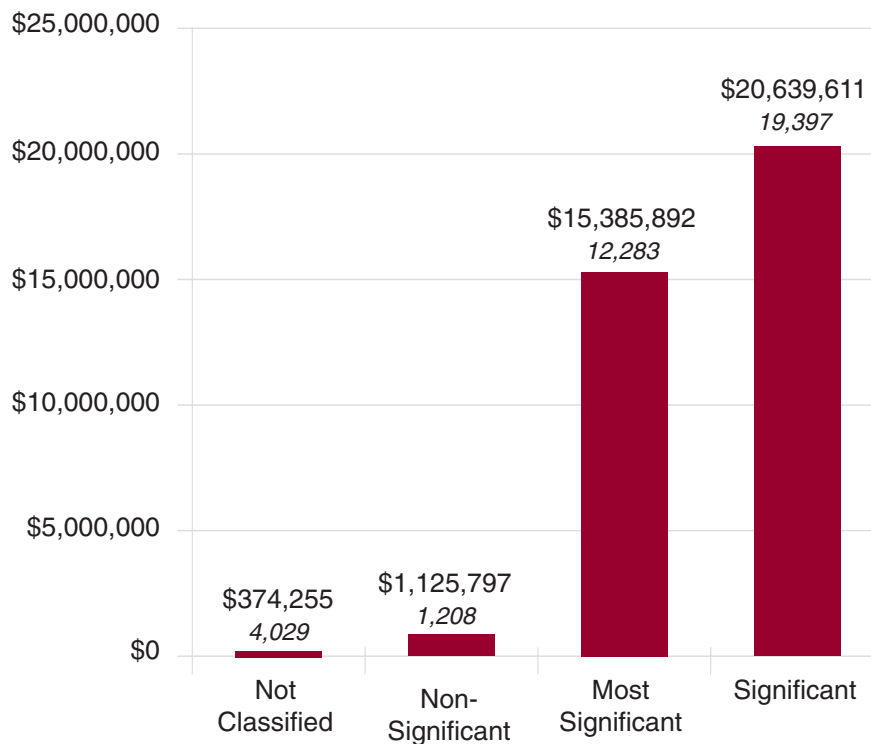
Below is combined program data from FFY 2005 (10/1/04 - 9/30/05) for the three Tribal programs:

Indicator	Number
Number of “eligible” individuals who received services under an Individualized Plan for Employment	239
Number of “eligible” individuals who achieved employment outcomes	44
Number of “eligible” individuals, served under an IPE who did not achieve an employment outcome	64
Percent of “eligible” individuals who left the program with employment outcomes	53%
Avg. weekly earnings of the individuals whose employment outcome resulted in earnings	\$361

■ DVR Budget Overview

During FFY 2005, there were 36,917 consumers who were in DVR's service system. Of that number, 13,556 were new applicants and 3,078 consumers achieved an employment outcome.

Expenditures by Order of Selection
Number of Consumers

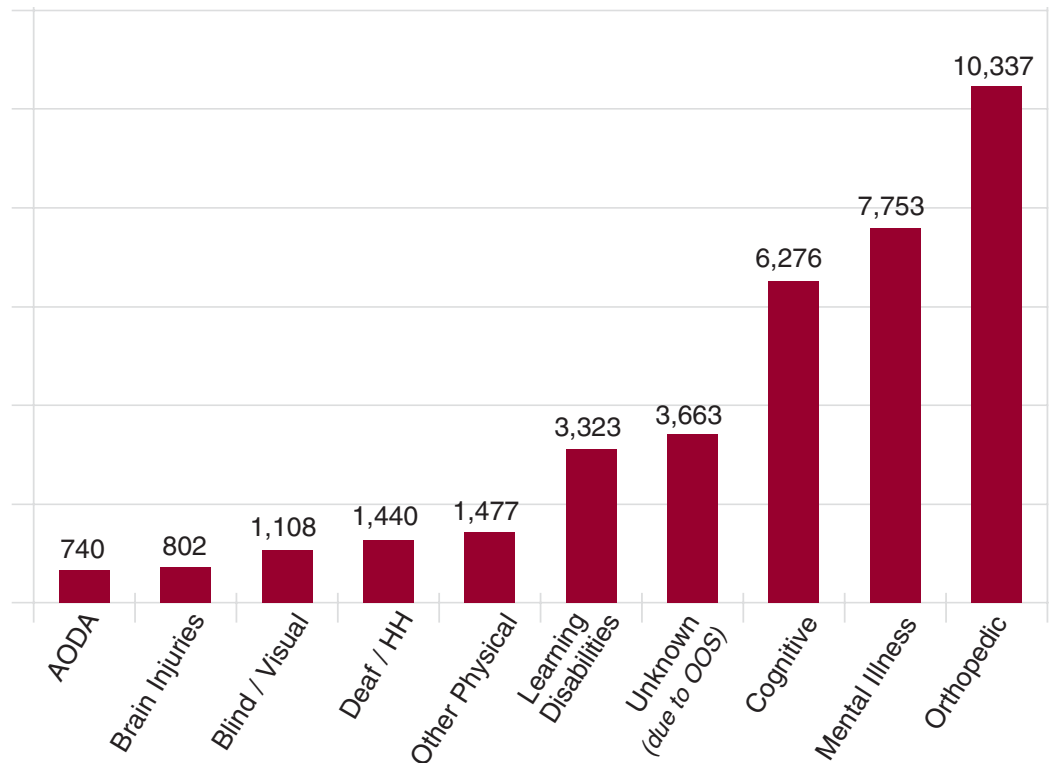


■ DVR Budget Overview/Consumers

Case Service Expenditures

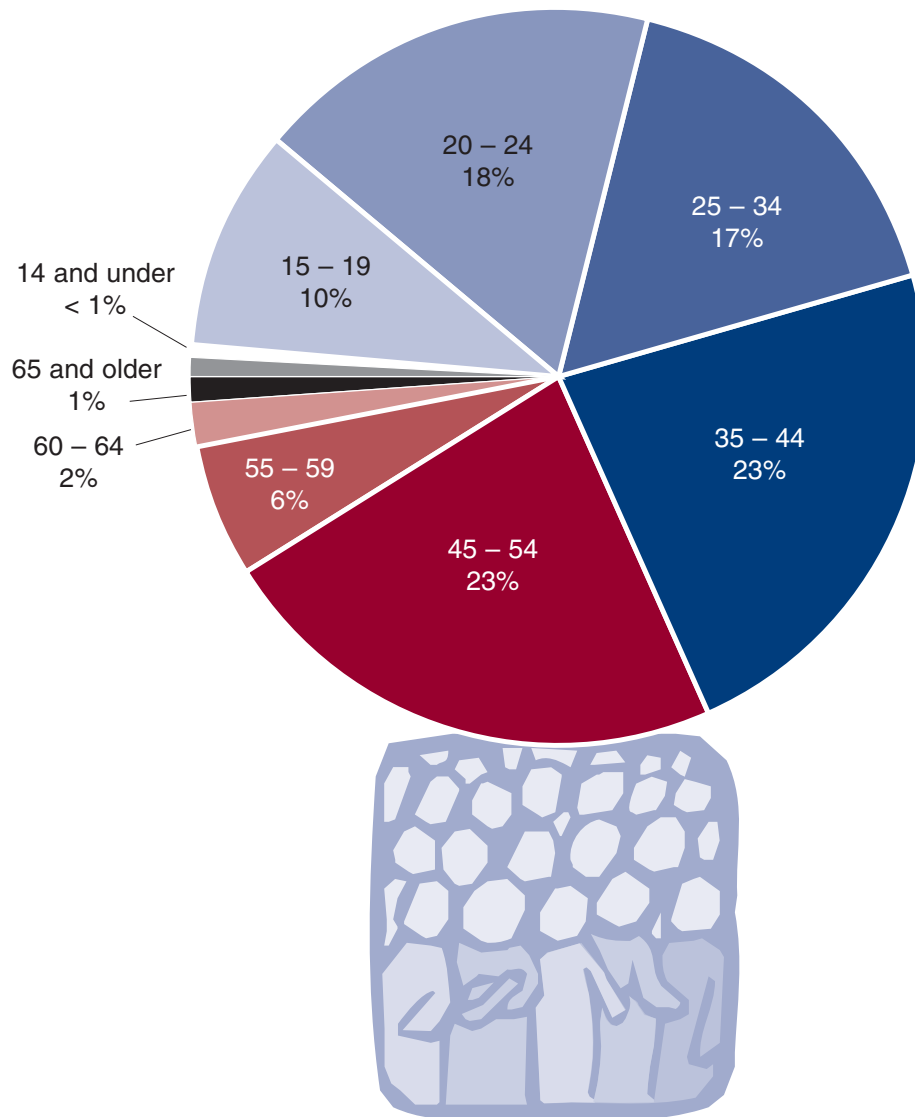
College/Voc/I School Training	\$11,960,956.56	31%	Work-related Matl/Tool	\$1,508,352.47	4%
Transportation: Public & Rural	\$3,176,691.26	8%	Work Experience	\$1,381,004.98	4%
Rehabilitation Tech. Services	\$2,937,501.00	8%	Maintenance	\$ 843,057.49	2%
Placement	\$2,314,814.16	6%	Restoration	\$ 834,586.00	2%
Supported Employment	\$2,262,589.61	6%	Small Business	\$ 760,002.23	2%
Books/Training Supplies	\$2,175,388.15	6%	Adjustment Services	\$ 711,872.84	2%
All Other Services	\$2,162,423.43	6%	Services to Family Members	\$ 456,518.95	1%
Other Training	\$1,959,443.64	5%	Vehicle Purchase Rentals	\$ 442,378.43	1%
Assessment	\$1,770,735.36	5%	Counseling	\$ 313,157.30	1%

Caseload by Disability Type

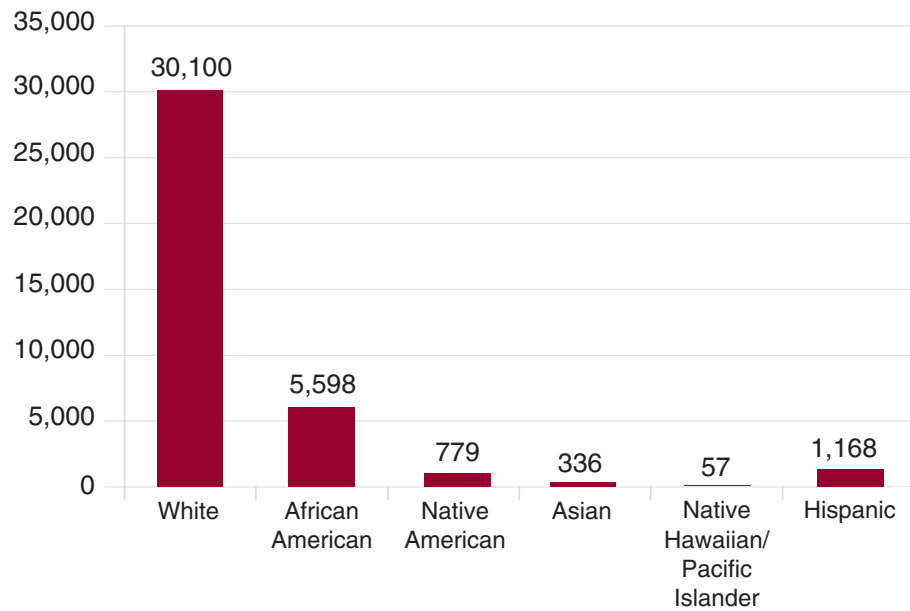


■ DVR Consumers

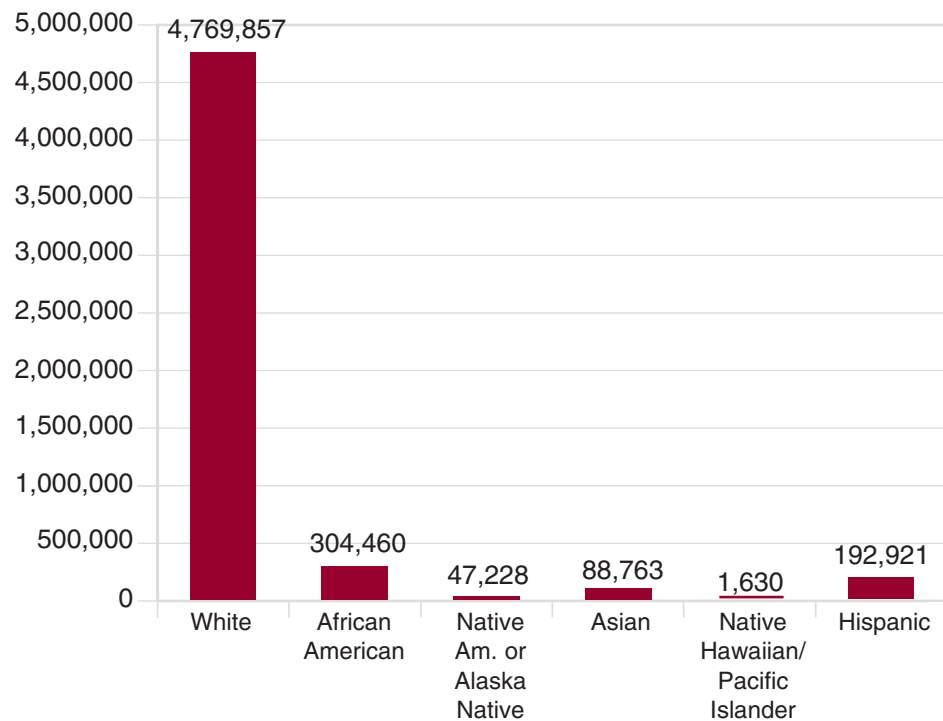
Caseload by Age Group



Caseload by Ethnic Race



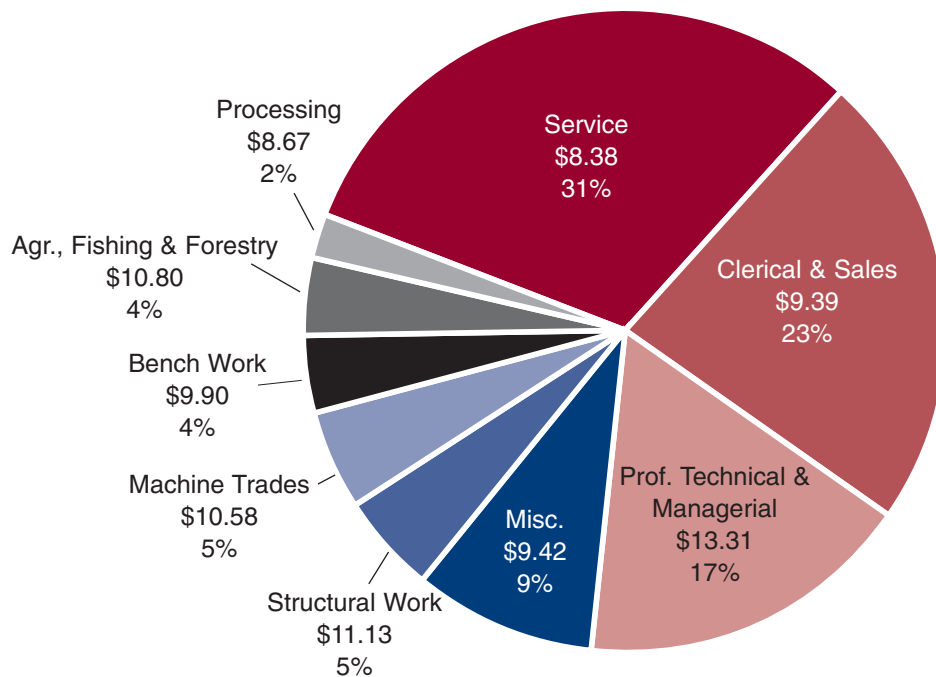
Wisconsin Population by Ethnic Race



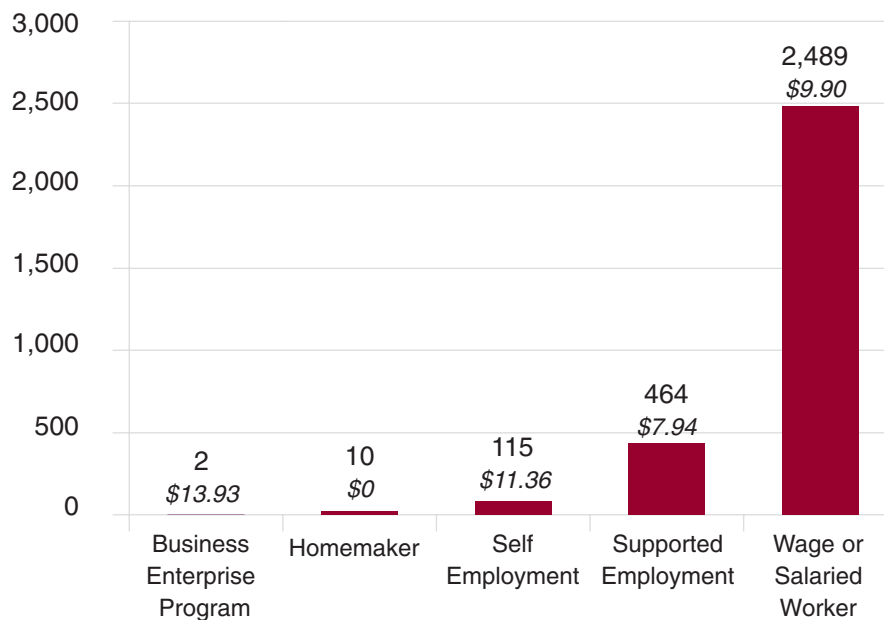
■ Outcomes

Types of Jobs and Hourly Wages Earned by DVR Consumers

N=3,078



Employment Outcomes Number of Consumers and Average Hourly Wage



DVR Consumers Contribute to the Economy

DVR consumers help grow Wisconsin's economy. 3,078 DVR consumers achieved their employment goal when they applied for DVR services in FFY 2005. This group reported a total annual income of \$7,184,013. After their successful rehabilitation, these same consumers reported a total annual income of \$47,393,999. This is a difference of \$40,209,986, which contributes to our state economy.





Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council Members

Paulette Bartelt
Past Vice Chair
Milwaukee

Rob Buettner
Treasurer
Wauwatosa

Sister Patrice Colletti
Milwaukee

Gerald Cywinski
Mosinee

Tom Draghi
Ladysmith

Charlene Dwyer
DVR Administrator
Madison

Karen Funkhouser
Madison

Steve Gilles
Madison

Ken Kluever
Madison

Gail Kolvenbach
Milwaukee

Lynda Krause
Kenosha

Peter Lucas
Menomonee Falls

John Lui
Menomonie

Chris Marschman
Madison

Janeal Quinnell
Milwaukee

Dan Sippl
Eau Claire

Dee Truhn
Superior

Linda Vegoe
Chair
Madison

Craig Wehner
Vice Chair
West Bend

————— *Thank You!* —————

*The Council gratefully acknowledges the work done by our retiring members.
We thank Paulette Bartelt, Sr. Patrice Colletti, Gerald Cywinski, Lynda Krause,
and Christopher Marshman for offering their time and talents
for Wisconsin residents with disabilities.*

